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ceasing toll levied by the group from which a man has taken his wife, and if he has more than one wife, there will be correspondingly as many groups, or, if a second wife is taken from the same group, the toll is doubled.

These presentations are officially regarded as gifts, but they are gifts from which there is no escape, and are the subject of endless bargaining, since they are regulated by a system of exchange gifts on the part of the wife's people to the son-in-law which take place publicly on certain ritual occasions. These, and the ritual accompanying the presentation, will be described later.[1] It is enough to mention here that the exchange presentation made by the wife's people to the son-in-law is never so large as that made by him to them, so that the balance is for ever in favour of them. As the wife's parents die, and as their place is taken by her brother and, later still, her brother's son, the value of the presentation due from her husband tends to decrease, owing to the relative ages and importance of the protagonists. Therefore, the older a man gets, the less he is liable to be forced to give away. Moreover, by this time he will have daughters of his own, from whose husbands he exacts the highest possible grades of tusked pig, and to whom he gives the minimum he can by way of exchange. In this way pigs tend to accumulate in the hands of the older men, and it is chiefly through this mechanism of official presentations from a man to his wife's people that the old men retain their preponderance of power.

Loans.

Of equal importance in the economic system as payments, gifts and presentations is the practice of letting pigs out on loan. We have already seen how, for example, on a man's marriage all his near patrilineal clansmen assist in providing the bride-price. The same system of inter-family loans obtains with respect to almost every enterprise a man sets his hand to. Under any of the circumstances listed above, or on any of the yet more numerous occasions not mentioned in which a man needs pigs, his kinsmen on both sides of his family including his mother's, and in particular his mother's brother, will, if needed and if they can afford it, assist with loans. In the case of pigs supplied by a man to his own son, particularly in such an essential matter as marriage, the loan need not be repaid. In the same way, a man will occasionally forgo repayment from a younger brother. In all other circumstances, however, a loan is strictly a loan, and must be repaid with interest. The interest in this case is calculated on the amount the loaned animal's tusks would have grown between the time of borrowing and of repayment. As repayment rarely follows quickly, by the time the debtor is called to book there is plenty of room for doubt as to the exact length of tusk to be made up.

[1] See pp. 303 ff.

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Even when this is agreed, the debtor may not possess a pig of the exact required grade. This leads to fresh transactions with yet other relatives, in which the debtor seeks to exchange such smaller pigs as he possesses against the single larger one demanded of him. In this way the ball rolls on. One transaction leads to another. Every pig-owner, that is to say every male adult, has pigs out on loan and is himself also a debtor to others. No man ever sees all his own pigs around him till the day of his death, when the final effort is made to regulate his affairs. Then, debtors and creditors assemble at his house and, if the latter are lucky and the dying man solvent, a just settlement takes place. If not, the debts are handed on to his successors. No loan is ever forgotten, and, with the additional factor of the uncertain prospect of life of any given pig, the complications never end. Every native complains that he has been cheated of value by others, and disputes leading to the forcible detention, or even the theft, of pigs are not infrequent. Given such a system, and the retentive memories of the natives, it is a tribute to the general common sense of the community and to the solidarity of kinsfolk—for it is only among close kinsfolk that extensive borrowing takes place—that such scenes are not more common than they are.

Sea-voyages for trade in pigs.

This short review of the commercial value of pigs has so far been confined within the precincts of Vao and of the neighbouring Small Islands and villages of the adjacent Malekulan mainland, where, owing to intermarriage, a Vao man's maternal kinsfolk often dwell. Perhaps the most striking evidence of the great value attached to them, of the great labour willingly undertaken to preserve and increase the stock, and of the risks endured to prosecute this end, is that of the sea-voyages organised almost exclusively for the sake of obtaining fresh supplies, to make up for the loss caused by the sacrifice of immense numbers of tusked pigs during the course of innumerable rites. The construction and consecration of these sea-going canoes, by means of yet further sacrifice, will be described in a separate chapter.[1] Apart from the trade in turmeric leaves, obtained from the islands of Malo and Santo in return for pigs, and in a few other objects, such as special kinds of bark brought home from Ambrim for the construction of high-grade bark-board belts, also paid for with pigs, and in fine dancing-aprons used in a special kind of dance which are obtained from Oba, the sole commercial object of these voyages is the purchase of fresh stocks of pigs. Whatever the original use of these great canoes—and it is certain that they were, among other things, the vessels by means of which some portion at least of the ancestors of the existing population arrived on Vao—it is the trade in pigs that is now the prime object of their manufacture. For this purpose the immense labour of building them is

[1] Chapter XVII.

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says that "they die calm and without apprehension." The two chief concerns of a man who knows he is about to die are:

(*a*) That his mortuary rites should be properly carried out. These he will often have partly performed already himself, and then he has no fear that his relatives will omit their part in sacrificing the necessary pigs.

(*b*) The regulation of his debts. Owing to the extremely complicated system of exchange and borrowing, there is no moment in a man's life when all the pigs in his possession are actually his own, or, conversely, when none of his own pigs have been lent to some relative or other. Such transactions, when they overstep a man's lifetime, as often they do, land his successors in disputes and difficulties from which they never fully disentangle themselves. For this reason, and because it is a man's pride to be recognised as a successful and wealthy man, who knows just where all his wealth is, and who owes no man what he cannot repay, one of a dying man's main concerns is to leave all his affairs publicly in order. He therefore sends out cycas-leaf tallies, on which the fronds on the left-hand side are plucked off so as to indicate his debts, and those on the right-hand the number and grade of pigs which he is owed. Debtors and creditors arrive, the former with pigs which they themselves have probably borrowed in order to pay back their debt, and a general settlement is made—that is to say, if the dead man is solvent. If he is not, his relatives strain every nerve to make him so. Disputes, however, not infrequently arise.[1]

[1] Godefroy recounts a modern case in point.

"Melte-sas died when he was about 65 years old. During his youth he had worked in Australia, in Queensland. When he came back to Vao, the old men pointed out to him how behindhand he was compared with those of his own age, who had already attained high rank by the sacrifice of large numbers of tusked boars. . . . He forthwith set about making up for lost time. Strong and courageous, he succeeded in amassing enough money, by the sale of copra, to obtain for himself an honourable place in clan debates. Driven by ambition, he wished to attain the rank of Melteg-amu. In order to reach this, he was compelled to borrow large numbers of tusked boars which he had been unable to repay. When he showed signs of dying, that is to say for the week preceding his death, all his creditors came to his house and, sitting squarely before him, reminded him of his debts. One put in a claim for three "*bowar*" [*bo-wars* —re-entrant-tusker] each worth £12: another pointed out that he had never repaid him the £10 of English money advanced to him for the purpose of prosecuting some rite: a third bitterly regretted having lent him four large pigs which had since inexplicably disappeared from circulation: lastly, two young braggarts loudly asserted that he had never properly paid for his last wife, and that they therefore claimed his last child, a young girl.

"To all these claimants the wretched Melte-sas replied by uttering an indisputable truth, namely that he was ruined, snowed under by debts owing to the downright bad faith of friends and enemies alike. He saw but one way in which they might recover at least part of what was justly owing to them; his son . . . would take service on a [white man's] trading-vessel and his wages would serve to pay off his father's debts. . . ."

On the other hand:

"Sum-tamat died as he had lived, swindling both relatives and friends. For twenty

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Mortuary Officials (*Talagh*)

764 767 The chief rôle in the mortuary rites for a *mer-sean* is taken by an official called *talagh*, whose main duty is the actual preparation of the body for burial. This man I will call the chief mortuary official. Certain other duties are performed by either one or more assistants, also called by the same name, whom I will therefore speak of as the assistant mortuary officials, though no such division of terminology exists in the native language. The word "official" alone will be used where the context makes it clear to whom it refers.

These men should be selected from among the members of the dead man's Lodge, but feeling is against the chief official being the own brother or son of the deceased. This may be because his intimate handling of the corpse would be too distressing to so near a relative; in any case, these relatives have too much to do to allow of their undergoing the confinement entailed. If a member of the dead man's own "Side of the Lodge" is not available for the office, then one will be chosen from the other "Side of the Lodge" belonging to the same Quarter.

All the mortuary officials sleep in the Quarter-Lodge (outside which the old man is buried) until the Fourteenth Day after death, when, after the launching of the canoe with provisions for the deceased, the duties of the assistant officials are over. The chief official remains in the Lodge till the performance of a special ceremony called *Tulagh*, or *Talogh*, when he makes his first public appearance and is paid for his services.[1]

Restrictions in regard to women.

764 767 834 There is no fasting for these men, but they may not have connexion with women for a year after the death of the old man, nor may they enter a woman's house (*ne-hime vavine*) during this period. During their fourteen days in the Lodge they may not be seen of women,[2] except by

763 426 years he had bled his fellow natives white by the practice of magic to obtain rain and wind. . . .

"He sent in his account in the form of a cycas leaf to all those concerned, who hastened to do him satisfaction by bringing all those pigs that they had been owing to him for so long. Stretched out on his mat, with tenderly appraising eye he surveyed this fine circle of pigs tethered around him, each at its stake. . . ." (Godefroy, 1, 1933, pp. 245-6.)

[1] See pp. 555-6.

[2] According to one statement, this only applies to the chief official, the others being allowed to go freely on errands connected with their work. In Wala, none of them may be seen, except a special one called the "outside official," who maintains the necessary connexion with the outside world, such as going to the mainland to procure food for himself and his companions.

The only time when the general rule of seclusion is broken in Vao is when the mortuary officials (with the possible exception of the chief official) appear in public at the feast called *Maisan*. See p. 548.